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## **USDA awards \$49 mil. in Specialty Crop Block Grant Program**

**By Agri-Pulse Staff**

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Agriculture Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan announced 55 grants Thursday totaling approximately \$49 million for 745 projects to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops, which are defined as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture and nursery crops, including floriculture. Upon reviewing states' plans for funding, USDA selected projects that support local and rural agriculture interests, increase the competitiveness of small producers, and promote or create direct marketing opportunities for specialty crop producers.

“Developing local and regional food systems that spur economic opportunity is the purpose of our ‘Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food’ initiative and these grants today are a significant part of achieving that goal,” Merrigan said. “We are pleased to be continuing this partnership in every state across the country to support their diverse efforts to promote healthy eating and grow specialty crop markets by expanding access to fresh, local foods.”

Funds will be used by the 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, according to their plans submitted to USDA that describe how the state agency will carry out the program. Summaries of all awards can be viewed at [www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp](http://www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp).

Through the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, USDA is committed to increasing child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops; improving efficiency and reducing costs of distribution systems; assisting all entities in the specialty crop distribution chain in developing Good Agricultural, Good Handling and Good Manufacturing practices, including cost share arrangements for funding audits of small farmer, packer and processor systems; investing in specialty crop research; enhancing food safety; developing new and improved specialty crop varieties; eradicating pest and plant health issues; and fostering organic and sustainable production practices.

**The 55 grant recipients are:**

Alabama Department of Agriculture & Industries - \$442,987.67  
Alaska Division of Agriculture - \$176,756.84  
Arizona Department of Agriculture - \$1,113,922.37  
Arkansas Agriculture Department - \$220,060.79  
California Department of Food and Agriculture - \$16,315,325.65  
Colorado Department of Agriculture - \$629,443.00  
Commonwealth of the N. Mariana Islands Dept. of Lands & Natural Resources - \$121,669.23  
Connecticut Department of Agriculture - \$320,502.74  
Delaware Department of Agriculture - \$226,495.45  
Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services - \$4,100,603.76  
Georgia Department of Agriculture - \$1,017,362.93  
Guam Department of Agriculture - \$164,711.28  
Hawaii Department of Agriculture - \$378,728.69  
Idaho State Department of Agriculture - \$882,094.50  
Illinois Department of Agriculture - \$437,304.71  
Indiana State Department of Agriculture - \$382,302.08  
Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship - \$243,405.15  
Kansas Department of Agriculture - \$214,055.68  
Kentucky Department of Agriculture - \$237,590.08  
Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry - \$338,982.59  
Maine Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources - \$382,441.97  
Maryland Department of Agriculture - \$503,304.47  
Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources - \$390,474.69  
Michigan Department of Agriculture - \$1,230,431.52  
Minnesota Department of Agriculture - \$578,008.12  
Mississippi Department of Agriculture - \$268,376.55  
Missouri Department of Agriculture - \$269,731.58  
Montana Department of Agriculture - \$249,379.89  
Nebraska Department of Agriculture - \$285,452.98  
Nevada Department of Agriculture - \$182,838.55  
New Hampshire Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food - \$229,319.98  
New Jersey Department of Agriculture - \$656,610.86  
New Mexico Department of Agriculture - \$380,581.79  
New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets - \$1,098,809.97  
North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services - \$1,092,487.64  
North Dakota Department of Agriculture - \$523,515.58  
Ohio Department of Agriculture - \$809,199.45  
Oklahoma State Department of Agriculture - \$333,507.33  
Oregon Department of Agriculture - \$1,673,704.49  
Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture - \$938,784.21  
Puerto Rico Department of Agriculture - \$363,961.04  
Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, Division of Agriculture - \$202,792.90  
South Carolina Department of Agriculture - \$402,462.32  
South Dakota Department of Agriculture - \$185,811.14  
Tennessee Department of Agriculture - \$455,621.73  
Texas Department of Agriculture - \$1,766,147.25  
U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture - \$163,169.73  
University of the District of Columbia, Agricultural Experiment Station - \$162,240.00  
Utah Department of Agriculture and Food - \$236,718.28  
Vermont Agency of Agriculture - \$204,289.94  
Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services - \$455,948.83  
Washington State Department of Agriculture - \$2,920,854.13  
West Virginia Department of Agriculture - \$184,663.10  
Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection - \$745,360.82

Wyoming Department of Agriculture - \$180,691.96

The 'Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food' initiative emphasizes the need for a fundamental and critical reconnection between producers and consumers. The effort builds on the 2008 Farm Bill, which provides for increases and flexibility for USDA programs in an effort to promote local foods. Consumer demand for locally grown food in the United States is expected to rise from an estimated \$4 billion in 2002 to as much as \$7 billion by 2012.

Since May, an inter-agency USDA 'Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food' task force has been working to align existing USDA programs with the needs of local and regional food systems; conducting outreach activities so that the linkages are understood; helping communities build local food systems by providing new initiatives; and engaging the American public in conversation about local and regional agriculture.

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